

Securing our economy means we will have safeguards in place to help prevent another economic disaster like the one brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, from which countless Americans suffered.

The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic fallout caused significant hardship. In the early months of the crisis, tens of millions of people lost their jobs.

While employment began to rebound within a few months, unemployment remained high throughout 2020.

Improving employment and substantial relief measures helped reduce the very high levels of hardship seen in the summer of 2020.

Nonetheless, considerable unmet needs remained near the end of 2021, with 20 million households reporting having too little to eat in the past seven days and 10 million households behind on rent.

In early 2022, some 3 million fewer people are employed than before the pandemic, though steady progress has been made, including in recent months.

Hardship in 2020 and 2021 would have been far worse without the extraordinary steps taken by the federal government, states, and localities to respond to the pandemic and its economic fallout.

Key hardship indicators showed strong improvement during early 2021, aided by job growth and government benefits.

Hardship rates fell especially fast thanks to the American Rescue Plan enacted on March 11, 2021, which included \$1,400 payments for most Americans as well as other assistance to struggling households.

Food hardship among adults with children also fell after the federal government began issuing monthly payments of the enhanced and expanded Child Tax Credit, which was first distributed on July 15, 2021, along with improvements in food assistance.

While those measures taken by the Biden Administration were swift and, I believe, life-saving, much of the suffering the American people went through could have been mitigated through extensive planning.

This bill provides those means, which drives my support. No more Americans should suffer because the federal government refused to plan in the case of a disaster.

The DHS Trade and Economic Security Council Act of 2021 is a legislative embodiment of that understanding, so I am proud to support it. I urge my colleagues to as well.

RESILIENT ASSISTANCE FOR MITIGATION FOR ENVIRONMENTALLY RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONSTRUCTION BY AMERICANS ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 5, 2022

MS. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 5689, the Resilient Assistance for Mitigation for Environmentally Resilient Infrastructure and Construction by Americans Act or the Resilient AMERICA Act.

This bill bolsters U.S. disaster resilience and expands resources and strategies for hazard mitigation by state, local, tribal, territorial governments, and some nonprofit organizations.

The bill permits the redistribution of hazard mitigation funds that are unclaimed or unobligated for use in addressing a future major disaster.

The legislation also increases from 6 percent to 15 percent the estimated aggregate amount of grants made for national public infrastructure pre-disaster mitigation assistance so that we're better prepared to respond to disasters.

It also makes private nonprofit facilities eligible for technical and financial assistance in the implementation of cost-effective pre-disaster hazard mitigation measures.

The overall effect would be to expand the use of hazard mitigation assistance to cover certain activities pertaining to wildfires, tsunamis, and ice storms.

Additionally, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) must set aside 10 percent of the funds annually to update relevant building codes on which consensus has been reached.

FEMA must also carry out a pilot program through which states and localities award grants to individuals for retrofitting their residences with appropriate hazard mitigation measures.

This legislation will build on the resilience initiatives contained in the recent bipartisan infrastructure law and provide additional tools to reduce risks posed by the changing climate.

For every dollar invested in resilience and predisaster mitigation, the taxpayer receives anywhere from \$3.00 to \$11.00 in return.

The Resilient AMERICA Act returns unspent funds from the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program to the Disaster Relief Fund (DRF), which ensures that these expiring and unspent funds will still help our communities prepare for and respond to disasters.

This bill doubles the funding stream dedicated to FEMA's Pre-Disaster Mitigation program and extends eligibility for Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) to include private nonprofits (PNPs), which ultimately will reduce the impact and damage from a disaster.

It also expands the reach of the post-disaster Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) to prevent utility outages in the face of extreme wildfire, wind, tsunami, and ice events.

It additionally funds residential resilience retrofit block grants to states, tribes, and territories to strengthen homes for maximum protection and safety.

It is clear that climate change is making extreme weather more intense and severe.

The snow and ice that unleashed a cascading effect of power and water outages in Texas and surrounding states was caused by a series of rare winter storms in 2021 and 2022.

My constituents were without potable water weeks after the storm, a lot of this damage was a direct consequence of a decades-long failure to maintain and upgrade our essential infrastructure.

We cannot leave our constituents living in mold-ridden homes, in the freezing cold, awaiting implementation of better, large-scale infrastructure.

We need our federal agencies and state governments to be proactive, anticipating potential infrastructure failures and working quickly to resolve them before Americans pay the price of our aged infrastructure.

This will reduce risk, save costs and encourage long-term planning and proactivity, rather

than on-the-fly response to the impending challenges to our infrastructure.

Storms are inevitable, but they don't need to become life, threatening disasters.

I ask my colleagues to join me in voting for H.R. 5689 because we all deserve better protection from the things we know are coming.

UPHOLDING THE FOUNDING DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION AND ESTABLISHING A CENTER FOR DEMOCRATIC RESILIENCE

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 5, 2022

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of House Resolution 831, which reaffirms unequivocal support for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as an alliance founded on democratic principles.

This resolution also calls on the President to use the voice and vote of the United States to adopt a new Strategic Concept for NATO that is clear about its support for shared democratic values and committed to enhancing NATO's capacity to strengthen democratic institutions within NATO member, partner, and aspirant countries.

Finally, the resolution calls on the President to use the voice and vote of the United States to establish a Center for Democratic Resilience within NATO headquarters.

First, I would like to commend all Ukrainians for their outstanding courage, resilience, fortitude, and bravery. It is truly inspiring for Americans, and for people around the world. America stands with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.

Russia's launch of a premeditated war against Ukraine is an attack on democracy and a grave violation of international law, global peace, and security.

The fighting has sparked massive displacement and has forced over two million Ukrainians to flee their homes to neighboring states and has put women and girls at heightened risk of violence.

Although the world hopes for peace, Russia's invasion of Ukraine shows no signs of ending. Russian forces continue their bombardment of Ukrainian cities, including the capital, Kyiv, and the southern port city of Mariupol.

Additionally, as a body we must condemn the recent execution style killings of Ukrainians in Bucha.

It is abundantly clear that Russian soldiers were out to torture, rape, and kill innocent Ukrainian civilians. These actions amount to war crimes, and we must treat them as such.

Therefore, along with the President I believe we must hold Russian authorities and President Putin accountable before the International Criminal Court via a War Crimes trial.

This will bring the justice so greatly deserved to those families who lost their mothers, fathers, sons, and daughters to savagery. I additionally believe that this is a good first action under NATO's new Strategic Concept, which this bill seeks to redefine.

Considering the direness of the situation in Ukraine, it is absolutely critical that NATO